DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 570 PS 028 556

AUTHOR Abecassis, Maurissa; Hartup, Willard W.
TITLE The Hatfields and the McCoys: Prevalence and Significance of Mutual Antipathies among Preadolescents and Adolescents.
PUB DATE 1999-04-00
NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Albuquerque, NM, April 15-18, 1999).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; Age Differences; Antisocial Behavior; Elementary Education; Females; Foreign Countries; Males; Peer Acceptance; *Peer Relationship; *Preadolescents; Prosocial Behavior; *Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS *Disliked Children; Netherlands

ABSTRACT

In this study, questions regarding the prevalence of mutual antipathies and their relation to the behavior of individual children were examined among preadolescents and adolescents. Mutual antipathies were defined as relationships in which children mutually nominated one another as least liked on a sociometric task. A distinction was drawn between same sex (SS) and mixed-sexed (MS) antipathies. Findings indicated that SS antipathies were more prevalent among boys than girls, especially in preadolescence. Involvement in MS antipathy was similar among boys and girls in preadolescence and adolescence. Involvement in SS antipathies was related to greater antisocial behavior and greater aggressiveness in preadolescence and adolescence, after social rejection was taken into account. Involvement in MS antipathy was associated with different patterns of adaptation for boys and girls: boys with MS antipathies were more antisocial and more prosocial in preadolescence, and more aggressive, higher achieving, and less withdrawn in adolescence, whereas the opposite pattern was observed for girls with MS antipathies. (EV)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 441 570

The Hatfields and the McCoys: Prevalence and Significance of Mutual Antipathies among Preadolescents and Adolescents.

Maurissa Abecassis and Willard W. Hartup

Institute of Child Development,

University of Minnesota

SHORT TITLE: MUTUAL ANTIPATHIES

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Maurissa Abecassis
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
1

Author Notes

This work was presented as a paper at the Biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development in Albuquerque New Mexico, April 15-18, 1999. We wish to thank our Dutch colleagues Cornelius Van Lieshout, Ron Scholte, Gerbert Haselager for their collaboration and assistance in all aspects of this project. We also thank Maria Thissen-Pennings and Frans Gremmen for their assistance with statistical matters.

PS 028556

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract:

Although it is widely acknowledged that having enemies is a part of social life, relationships based on mutual dislike have received little empirical scrutiny. Mutual antipathies are defined as relationships in which children mutually nominated one another as liked least on a sociometric task. A distinction was drawn between same-sex (girl-girl or boy-boy dyads) and mixed-sex antipathies (girl-boy dyads). In this study, questions regarding the prevalence of mutual antipathies and their relation to the behavior of individual children was examined among preadolescents and adolescents. Findings indicated that same-sex antipathies were more prevalent among boys than among girls especially in preadolescence. Mixed sex antipathy involvement was similar among boys and girls in preadolescence and adolescence. Involvement in same-sex antipathies was related to greater antisocial behavior and greater aggressiveness in preadolescence and adolescence after social rejection was taken into account. Mixed-sex antipathy involvement was associated with different patterns of adaptation for boys and girls. Boys with MS antipathies were more antisocial and more prosocial in preadolescence and more aggressive, higher achieving and less withdrawn in adolescence. The opposite pattern was observed for girls with MS antipathies.

KEY WORDS: peer relations, mutual antipathies, dislike

The Hatfields and the McCoys: Prevalence and Significance of Mutual Antipathies among Preadolescents and Adolescents

Considerable work has been done on relationships whose core features are mutual liking and a desire to affiliate. Friendships, for example, provide children with opportunities for self-disclosure, a sense of intimacy, and are a source of social support (Hartup, 1996). More recently, researchers have also turned their attention to the more negative or problematic aspects of these relationships, especially to the occurrence of aggression in close relationships (see Crick & Grotepeter, 1995).

One category of relationships that, up to this point, has received limited empirical investigation, are relationships whose core feature is mutual dislike--antipathies in a word. For example, the legend of the Hatfields and the McCoys is a well-known tale in which enemy relationships existed between members of two different families. Although it is widely acknowledged that having antipathies is a part of social life, relationships based on mutual dislike have received little empirical scrutiny. The category of mutual antipathies encompasses a variety of relationships including enemies, bully-victim relationships in many instances, and children with simple aversions. What these different types of antipathies share is a basis of reciprocated dislike among those involved in these relationships.

In this study, we examined relationships whose defining characteristic is mutual antipathy. Antipathies among children and adolescents can be identified easily using sociometric nominations in which individual children are asked to nominate three of their classmates as "liked least" . Mutual antipathies exist if one

child dislikes another child and that child, in turn, reciprocates with a liked least nomination. A further distinction can also be drawn between involvement in a same-sex antipathy (SS) and involvement in a mixed-sex antipathy (MS). SS antipathies refer to relationships in which children of the same sex mutually dislike one another; MS antipathies refer to relationships in which children of one sex mutually dislike a member of the other sex. Although a considerable body of research exists on some types of antipathies (e.g., bully-victim relationships), comparatively little evidence deals with the prevalence and implications of involvement in mutual antipathies (SS or MS).

In one study, researchers were unable to find a substantial number of mutual antipathies among preschool children (Hayes, Gershman and Bolin, 1980). More recently, Hembree and Vandell (1999) examined the prevalence of mutual antipathies among third grade children as well as the correlation between involvement in these relationships and academic and social adjustment. Sixty eight percent of the children in this study had at least one mutual antipathy and some had as many as three antipathies. Involvement in these relationships was negatively correlated with both behavioral measures. Based on this information , one can hypothesize that involvement in mutual antipathies may be a risk factor of some importance.

Further examination of mutual antipathies is warranted for several reasons. First, relationships based on reciprocated disliking may be categorically different from relationships based on mutual liking--both in terms of interpersonal dynamics and developmental significance for the individuals involved. Second, mutual antipathies may differ considerably from one way aversions. Most of what we

know about peer rejection is based on assessments that make no distinction between unilateral (unreciprocated) disliking and bilateral aversions. Peer rejection, of course, is related to loneliness, poor social adjustment, poor academic performance, and poor mental health outcomes (Bukowski, Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996). Mutual antipathies may or may not be an additional or separate risk factor for poor psychosocial adjustment beyond that specified by unilateral rejection alone. The work by Hembree and Vandell (1999), however, supports this notion.

This study, was organized around a series of questions regarding the prevalence of mutual antipathies and their relation to the behavior of individual children and adolescents. Individuals were identified in two large samples who were involved in either SS or MS antipathies and contrasted with individuals who were not involved in these relationships. In this work, we addressed the following issues; First, how prevalent are SS and MS antipathies among preadolescents and among adolescents? Second, do gender differences exist in involvement in mutual antipathies especially as a function of the gender composition of the dyad (SS or MS)? Third, is involvement in mutual antipathies related to composite peer ratings of behavioral adaptation in preadolescence and adolescence even after a child's social rejection status is taken into account? We examined how antipathy involvement (SS and MS) is related to antisocial behavior and prosocial behavior among preadolescents and to aggression-inattentiveness and achievement-withdrawal among adolescents.

Method

Participants. Data were obtained from a large longitudinal study that was initiated 14 years ago in order to investigate the developmental consequences of peer

rejection. The target sample recruited at that time consisted of more than 200 first-grade boys attending elementary schools in the Nijmegen/Arnhem area in the eastern part of the Netherlands. The sample came from middle and low income families and were primarily Caucasian (13% were ethnic minorities). Our analyses are not based on this longitudinal sample but on cross-sectional samples of the target children's classmates when the targets were in fifth grade (11 years of age) and eighth grade (14 years of age). The fifth grade sample consisted of 2, 348 (1, 251 boys and 1, 097 girls) children and the adolescent sample included 2,768 (1,522 boys and 1,246 girls) children. The samples were non-overlapping since none of the children who participated in the fifth grade assessment were included in the eight grade assessment.

Measures

To examine the nature of mutual antipathies a series of measures were obtained.

a) Mutual Antipathies: To identify mutual antipathies we used a sociometric nomination procedure described earlier. Both the preadolescents and the adolescents were asked to nominate three children in their classes that they "liked least". Individuals were classified as having a same-sex mutual antipathy if they nominated a same-sex peer as "least liked" and this child reciprocated the nomination. Individuals were classified as having a mixed-sex mutual antipathy if a child of one sex nominated a peer of the other sex as "least liked" and this child reciprocated the nomination. Children could have as many as three mutual antipathies using this method.

Social Rejection: Social rejection scores of the children were obtained using the "liked least" sociometric nomination. Raw numbers of liked least nominations were

standardized into probability scores and then into standard scores . The z-score transformation was done separately for each class yielding a social rejection score for each child. This is a group level measure assessing, in general, how much a child is disliked by his/her classmates.

B) Behavioral Measures: Many behavioral measures were available in these data sets. The results are presented for a small number of composite peer ratings in the areas of antisocial behavior and selected aspects of socially competent behavior. The measures used for preadolescents and adolescents were different and are described separately.

For preadolescents, composite measures of antisocial behavior and prosocial behaviors were used to investigate the relation between involvement in mutual antipathies and social behavior. An antisocial score was calculated by combining scores on three sociometric questions: which three children 1) disturb class, 2) bully others, 3) fight? A prosocial score was based on two sets of sociometric nominations: which three children: 1) offer help and 2) cooperate?

For adolescents, two behavioral composites will be discussed: a) an Antisocial score based on nominations for quarrelsomeness, blaming others, laziness /unambitiousness and unreflectiveness /unintelligent and b) an Achievement-Withdrawal composite was based on nominations for being persistent, hardworking, shy/reserved, relaxed/resilient, and withdrawn/inhibited.

Results

Prevalence of Mutual Antipathies: A series of Chi Square analyses were conducted to examine the association between involvement in mutual antipathies and gender. Among preadolescents, a significant association between gender and involvement in

same-sex antipathies was found $\chi 2$ (3, N=2348) = 111.2, p <.001 indicating that 24.5% of boys were involved in these relationships compared to 8.3% of girls. Among preadolescents, there was no significant association between gender and mixed-sex antipathy involvement $\chi 2$ (3, N=2348) = 5.66, p =.130. Boys and girls were involved in MS antipathies to the same extent (16.9 % of boys and 17% of girls). Among the preadolescents involved in antipathies (SS and MS), most had only one.

Among adolescents, a similar pattern of involvement in antipathies was evidenced. For SS antipathies, chi square analyses again revealed an association between gender and antipathy involvement $\chi 2$ (3, N=2768) = 12.0, p <.01. Boys (19%) were involved in SS antipathies more than girls (14.2%) but the gap between boys and girls involvement is less pronounced. For MS antipathies, girls (15%) and boys (12.3%) were involved in MS antipathies with almost the same frequency. Once again, most adolescents with antipathies (SS or MS) in adolescence had only one.

Insert Figures 1 and 2

Antipathies and Social Behavior: To examine the relationship between involvement in mutual antipathies and social behavior, a series of ANCOVAS were conducted with the child's general rejection status (standardized dislike score) as the covariate and Gender and involvement in mutual antipathies: (no antipathies, 1 antipathy, or 2+ antipathies), as the independent variables. The covariate was included to

determine if a child's social rejection, rather than involvement in mutual antipathies accounted for the individual differences in behavior. Analyses will be described separately for preadolescents and adolescents, and for same and mixed sex antipathies. Description of the findings will focus on main effects and interactions involving antipathy status.

Preadolescents

A) Antisocial Behavior: In the area of antisocial behavior, significant outcomes, included the effects of the covariate, and main effects for gender and SS antipathies. As shown in Figure 3, preadolescents with 2+ SS (M= .266) mutual antipathies were rated by peers as more antisocial than children with 1 antipathy (M=.030) and those without (M =.026) antipathies ($F(2, 2341)=559.9$, $p < .001$). This effect was especially pronounced in the area of peer rated fighting.

For MS antipathies, there were significant main effects of the covariate, Gender , and a significant Gender X MS antipathies interaction, $F(2, 2341)=16.98$ $p< .001$. As indicated in Figure 4, preadolescent girls with 2+ MS antipathies (M= -.631) were rated as less antisocial than girls with 1 MS antipathy (-.400) who were less antisocial than girls without antipathies. In contrast, boys with 1 MS antipathy (.607) were rated as significantly more antisocial than boys no MS (.263) antipathies.

Insert figures 3 and 4 here.

B) Prosocial Behavior: We also examined how involvement in SS and MS antipathies is related to prosocial behavior in preadolescence. For SS antipathies, we found significant main effects of the covariate, and gender but no significant

effects involving SS antipathy status. It appears that prosocial behavior in preadolescence is unaffected by involvement in a SS antipathy.

However, when we examined the relation between involvement in MS antipathies and prosocial behavior, significant effects of the covariate, and a significant Gender X MS antipathy interaction were found, $F(2, 2341) = 10.09$, $p < .001$. As depicted in Figure 5, preadolescent girls with 2+ MS (M=-.265) antipathies were rated by peers as less prosocial than girls with 1 (M=.076) or without (M=.187) MS antipathies who did not differ from one another. However, boys with 1 (M=.123) or 2+ (M=.254) MS antipathies were rated as more prosocial than boys without (M= -.061) MS antipathies.

Insert figures 5 here.

Adolescents

For the adolescents, we examined the relation between antipathies and behavioral patterns such as aggression and achievement-withdrawal.

a) Aggression-Inattentiveness: The results on peer rated aggressiveness showed significant effects of the covariate, gender and SS antipathies, $F(2, 2761) = 3.71$, $p < .05$. Adolescents with 1 (M =.629) SS antipathy were rated by peers as more aggressive and less attentive than adolescents without antipathies (.605)--a similar result to that obtained with preadolescents.

Examining the relation between Aggression-Inattentiveness and MS antipathies, we find effects of the covariate, gender, and a significant Gender X MS antipathies interaction, $F(2, 2761) = 4.20$, $p < .05$. Among boys, those with 2+ MS (M=.722) antipathies were rated as significantly more aggressive than boys

without (M=.649) antipathies. However, girls with and without MS antipathies did not differ significantly in peer rated aggressiveness.

Insert figures 6 and 7 here.

B) Achievement-Withdrawal: The last behavioral measure that we examined was a measure of peer rated achievement withdrawal. In examining SS antipathies, there was a main effect of gender, and a Gender X SS antipathies interaction, $F(2, 2761) = 8.66$, $p < .001$. Girls with 1 (M= .495) or 2+ (M= .472) SS antipathies were rated as lower achieving and more withdrawn than girls without (M= .574) them, but boys' peer rated achievement was not associated with SS antipathy involvement.

For MS antipathies, we again obtained a main effect of Gender and a Gender X MS Antipathies interaction $F(2, 2761)= 9.45$, $p < .001$. Adolescents without MS antipathies (M= .560) were rated as significantly higher achieving and less withdrawn than adolescents with 1 antipathy (M=.499).

Insert figures 8 and 9 here.

Discussion and Implications:

Based on this work, two general messages can be drawn about mutual antipathies. First, a substantial number of children experience these relationships -- boys more than girls especially among preadolescents. The gender composition of these antipathies (i.e., Same-Sex or Mixed-Sex) is a significant consideration.

A second important finding is that mutual antipathies have implications for

social adaptation beyond what we know about social rejection. Taken together, the findings suggest that SS antipathy involvement affects children the same way irrespective of gender, particularly in the area of antisocial and aggressive behavior. SS antipathy involvement was associated with antisocial behavior in preadolescence, and aggressiveness in adolescence. Furthermore, girls with SS antipathies in adolescence also showed lower peer rated achievement and higher withdrawal.

In contrast, gender is an important consideration in understanding involvement in MS antipathies among preadolescents and adolescents. Overall, girls appear to be more negatively affected by involvement in MS antipathies compared to boys. Boys with MS antipathies were rated as more antisocial and more prosocial than boys without MS antipathies. Girls with MS antipathies, however, were rated as less antisocial and less prosocial than girls without MS antipathies. In adolescence, involvement in MS antipathies is associated with greater aggressiveness for boys and higher peer rated achievement. It appears that girls with MS antipathies are most negatively affected by this involvement especially compared to girls without these relationship and to boys with and without MS antipathies. Finally, our work shows that mutual antipathies are related to social functioning in preadolescence and adolescence in prosocial and antisocial behavior and in aggression and achievement , respectively.

Our findings suggest that , in future research, it is important to consider the predictive significance of these experiences. Using a longitudinal sample, we are examining the impact of antipathies in middle childhood on later adaptation. These findings, however, do not shed light on the causal processes by which involvement

in antipathies affect behavior and development. We need to learn more about the developmental course of these relationships and the causal relations between involvement in antipathies and behavior.

References

Hartup, W.W. (1996). The Company they keep: Friendship and their developmental significance. Child Development, 67 (1), 1-13.

Bukowski, W.M., & Hoza , B., (1989). Popularity and friendship: Issues in theory, measurement and outcome. Wiley series on Personality processes, New York, NY.

Crick N., & Grotepeter, J. (1995). Relational aggression, gender and social psychological adjustment. Child Development, 66, 710-722.

Hayes, D., Gershman, E., & Bolin, L. (1980). Friends and enemies: Cognitive bases for preschool children's unilateral and reciprocal relationships. Child Development, 51, 1276-1279.

Hembree, S., & Vandell, D., (1999). Reciprocity in Rejection: The role of mutual antipathy and children's adjustment. Unpublished manuscript, University of Wisconsin.

Wiseman, J.P. & Duck , S., (1995). Having and managing enemies: Avery challenging relationship. In S. Duck, & J. Wood, (Eds.), Confronting relationship challenges: Understanding relationship processes series , Vol. 5 (pp. 43-72), Thousand Oaks; CA: Sage.

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Percentage of girls and boys having same and mixed sex antipathies in preadolescence.

Figure 2. Percentage of girls and boys having same and mixed sex antipathies in adolescence.

Figure 3. Mean standardized antisocial composite scores for girls and boys with no antipathies, 1 antipathy or 2+ same-sex antipathies.

Figure 4. Mean standardized antisocial composite scores for girls and boys with no antipathies, 1 antipathy or 2+ mixed-sex antipathies.

Figure 5. Mean Standardized prosocial composite scores for girls and boys with no antipathies, 1 antipathy or 2+ mixed-sex antipathies.

Figure 6. Mean Standardized aggressiveness composite scores for girls and boys with no antipathies, 1 antipathy or 2+ same-sex antipathies.

Figure 7. Mean Standardized aggressiveness composite scores for girls and boys with no antipathies, 1 antipathy or 2+ mixed-sex antipathies.

Figure 8. Mean Standardized achievement composite scores for girls and boys with no antipathies, 1 antipathy or 2+ same-sex antipathies.

Figure 9. Mean Standardized achievement composite scores for girls and boys with no antipathies, 1 antipathy or 2+ mixed-sex antipathies.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

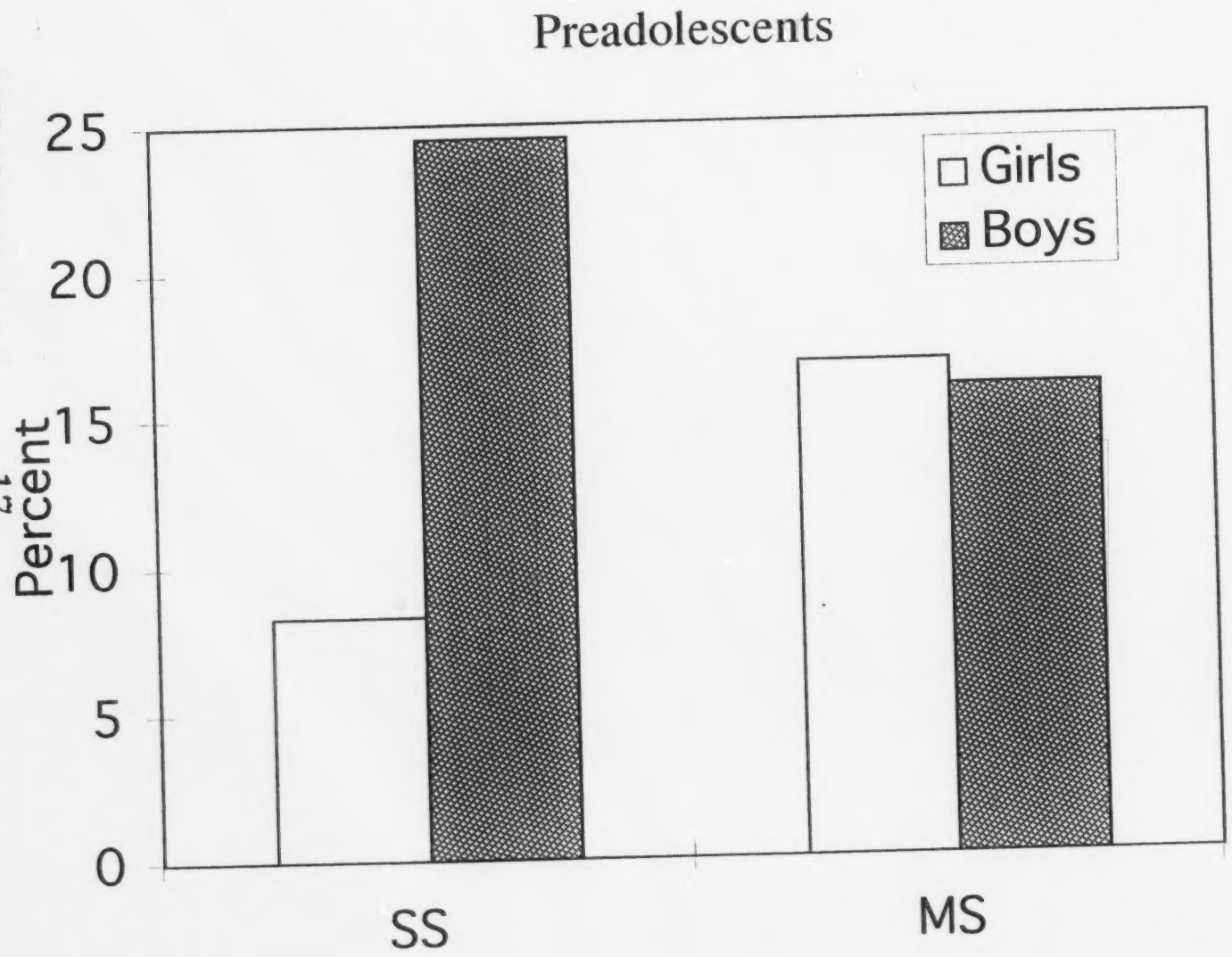
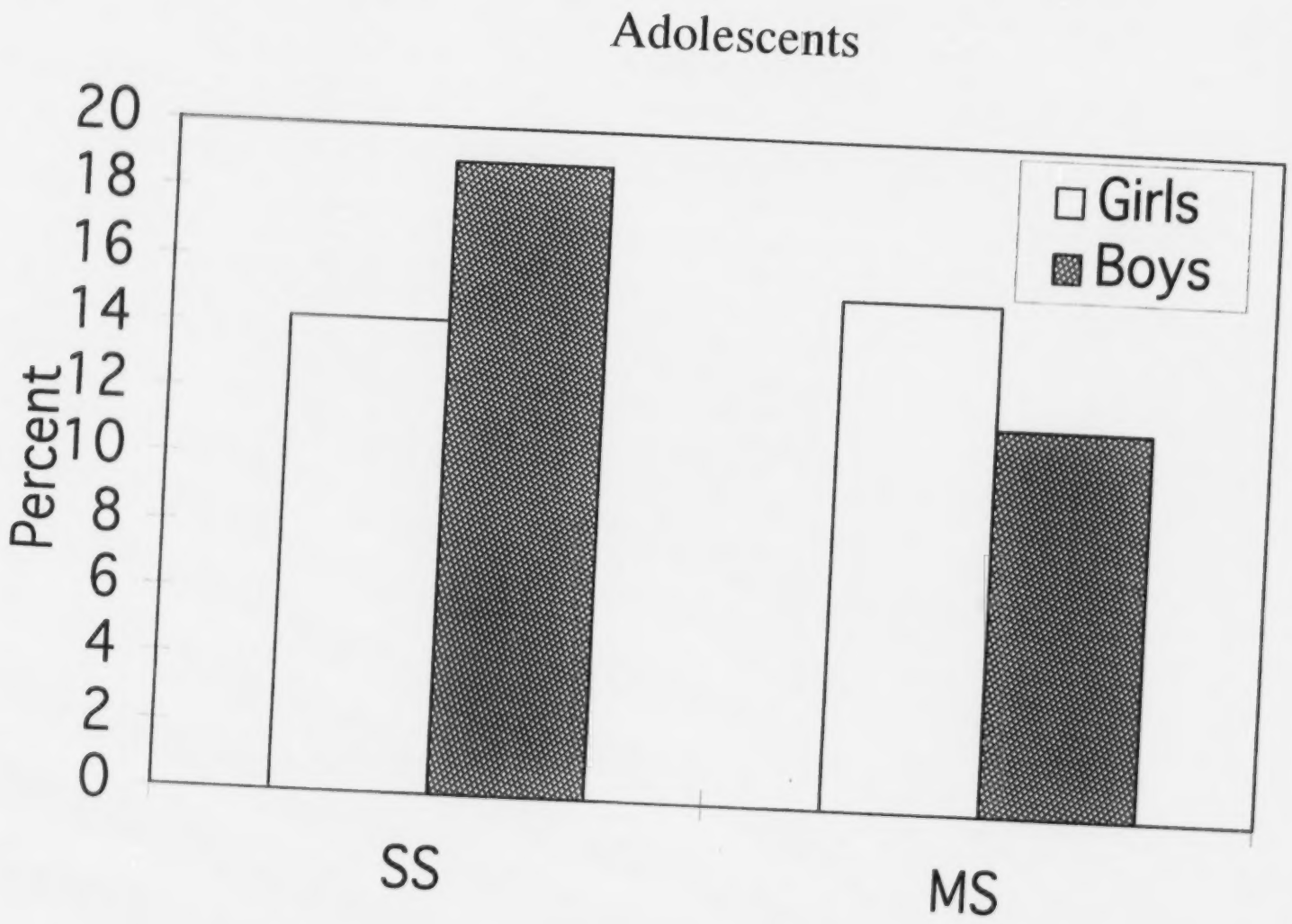
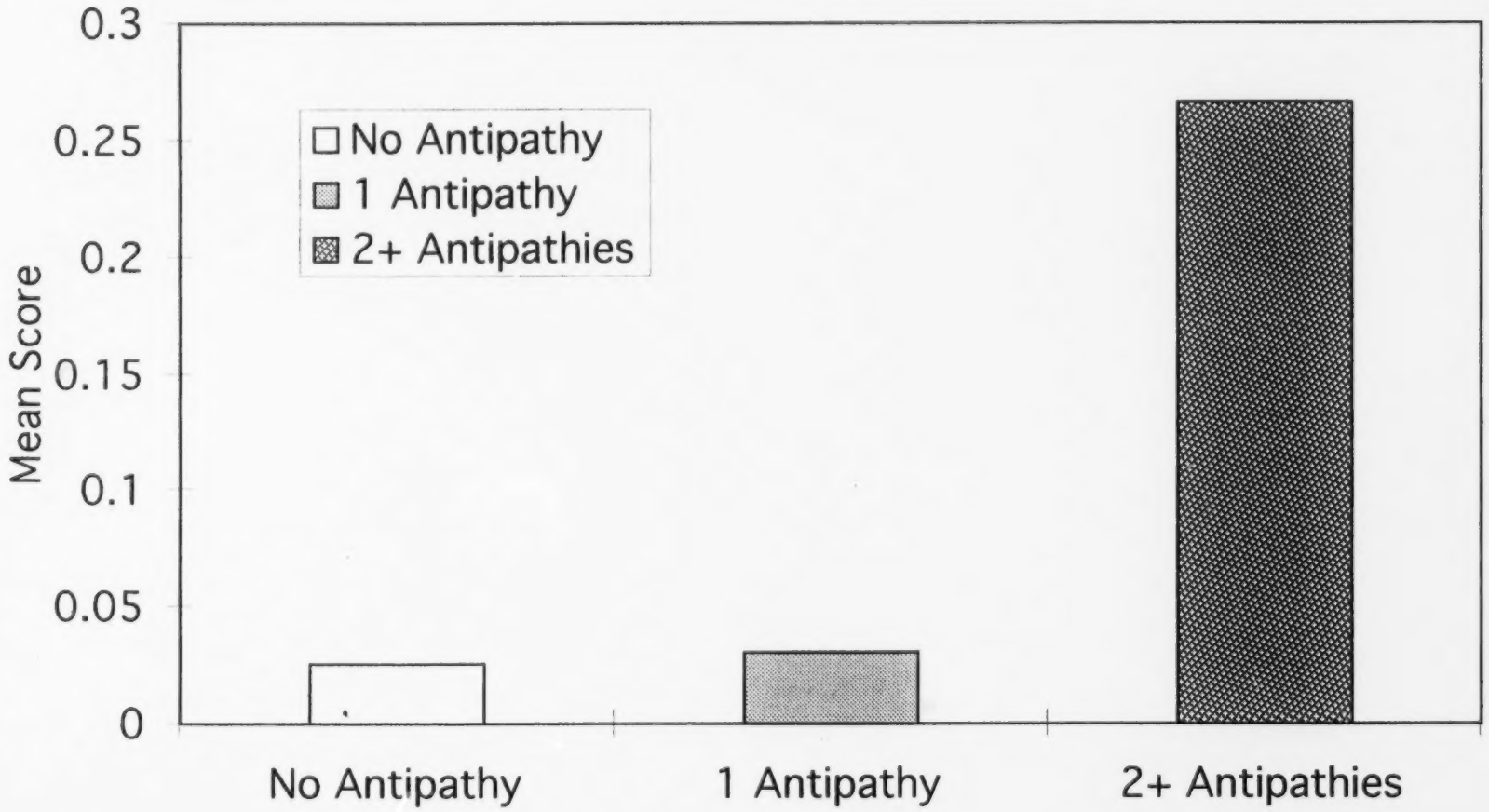


Fig 1

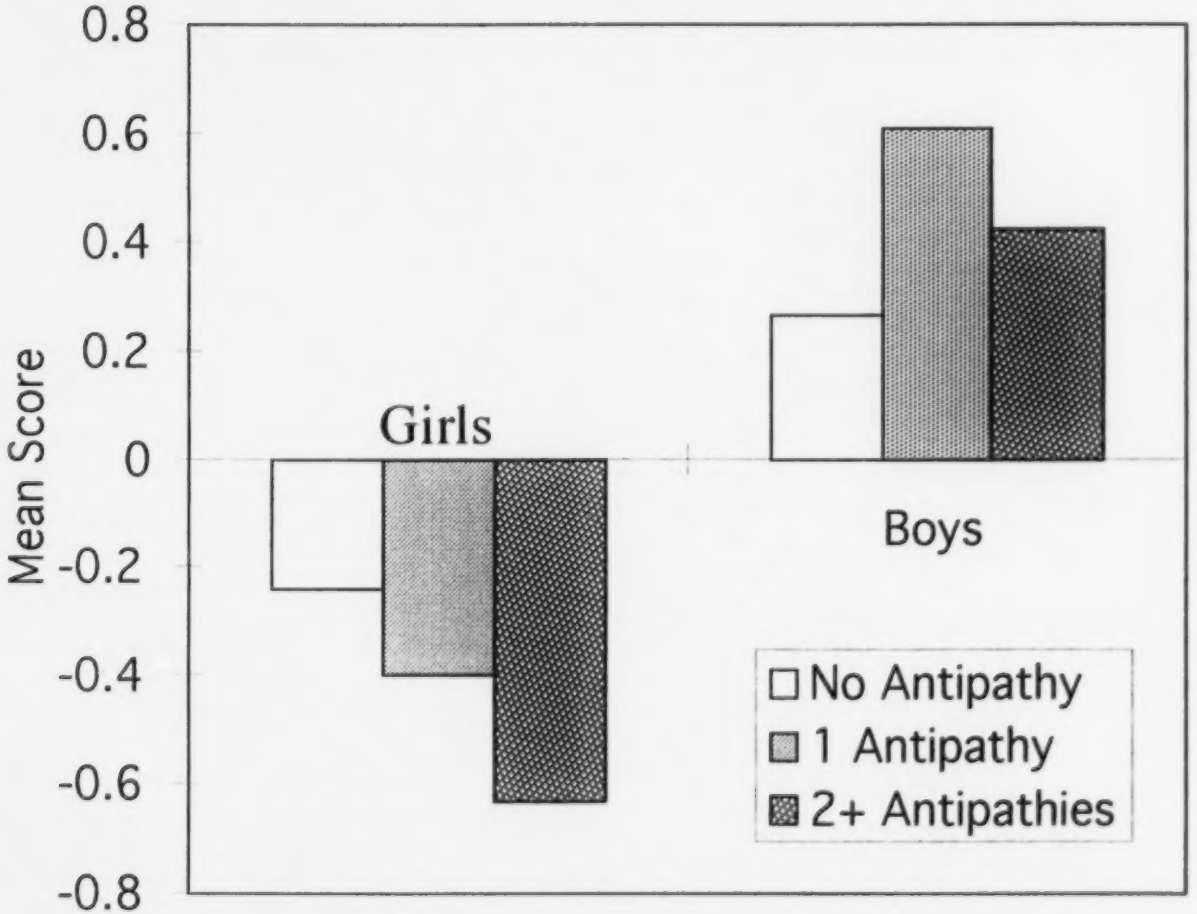

Adolescents
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
Percent
Girls
Boys
SS
MS


0.3
0.25
0.2
0.15
0.1
0.05
0
Mean Score
No Antipathy
1 Antipathy
2+ Antipathies
No Antipathy
1 Antipathy
2+ Antipathies

20

21

Fig 3


0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0
-0.2
-0.4
-0.6
-0.8
Mean Score
Girls
Boys
No Antipathy
1 Antipathy
2+ Antipathies

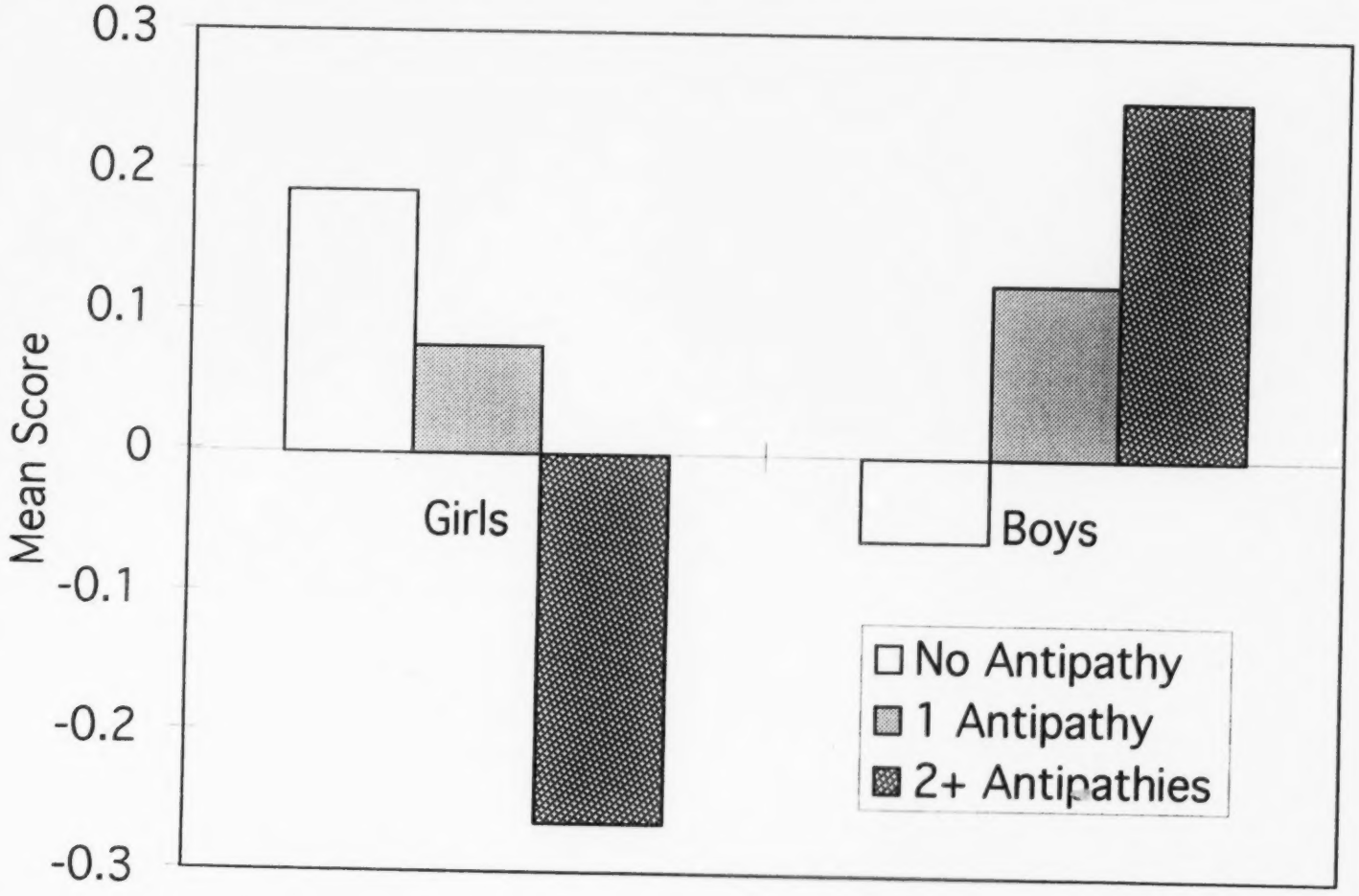
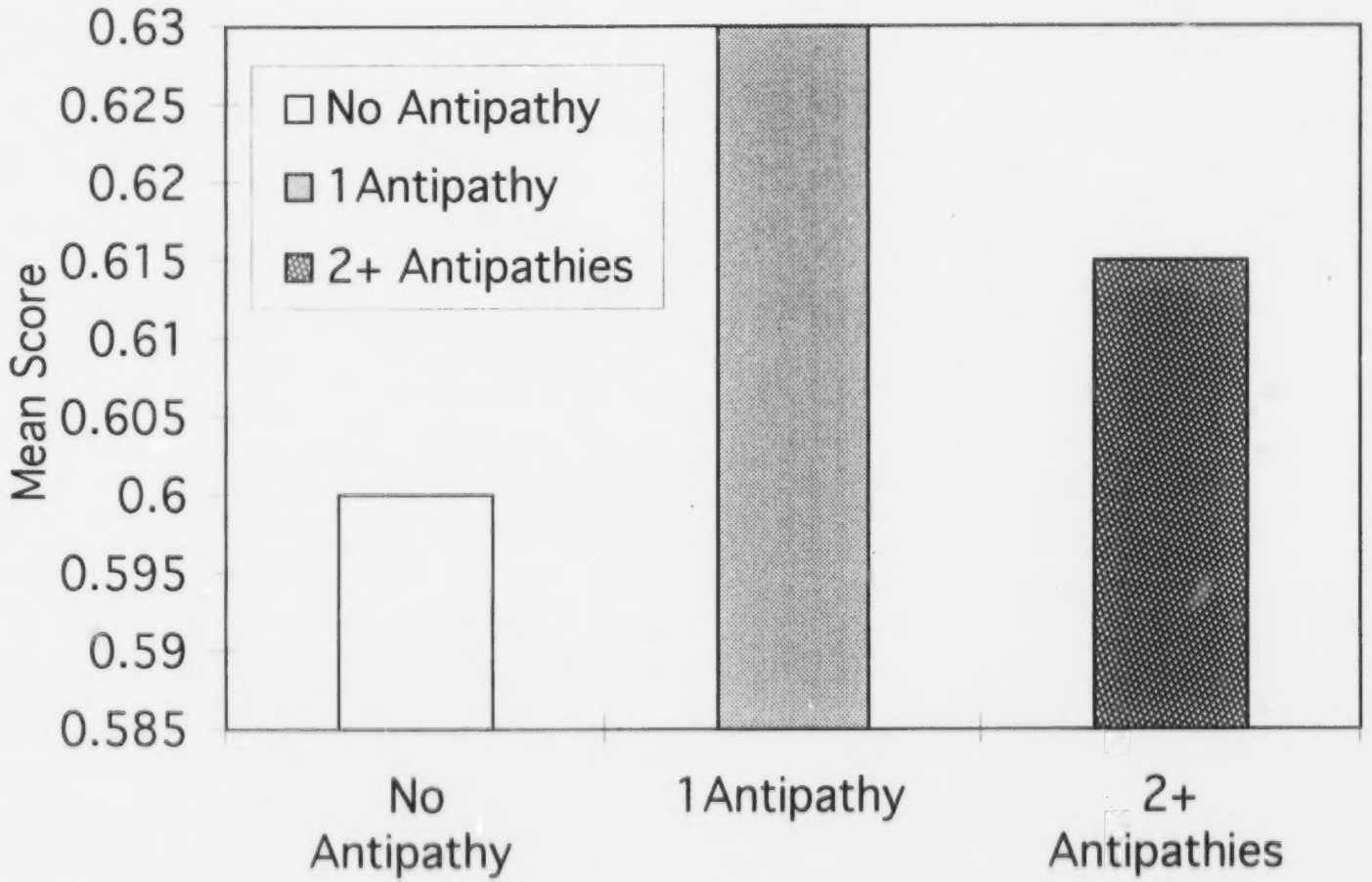
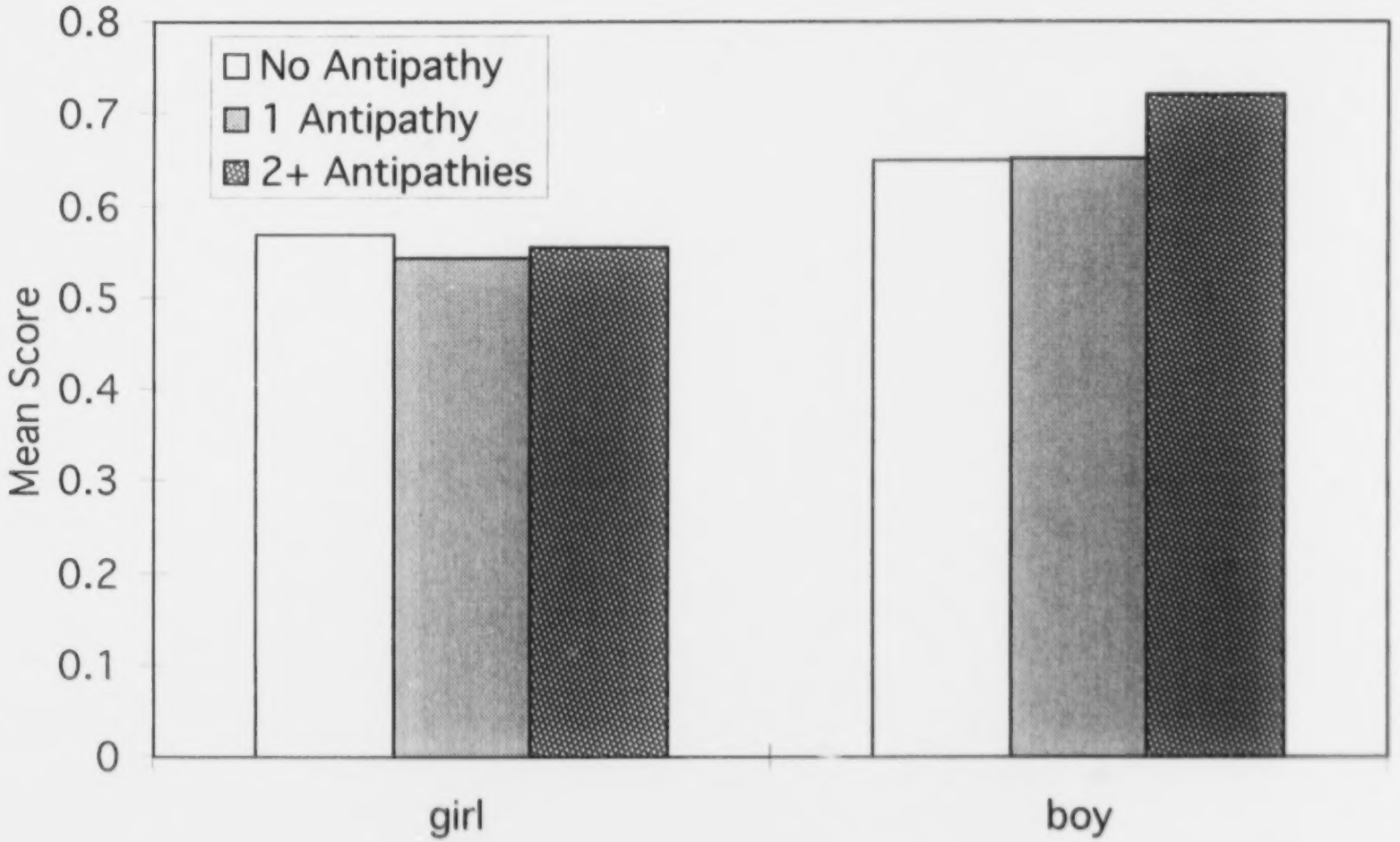
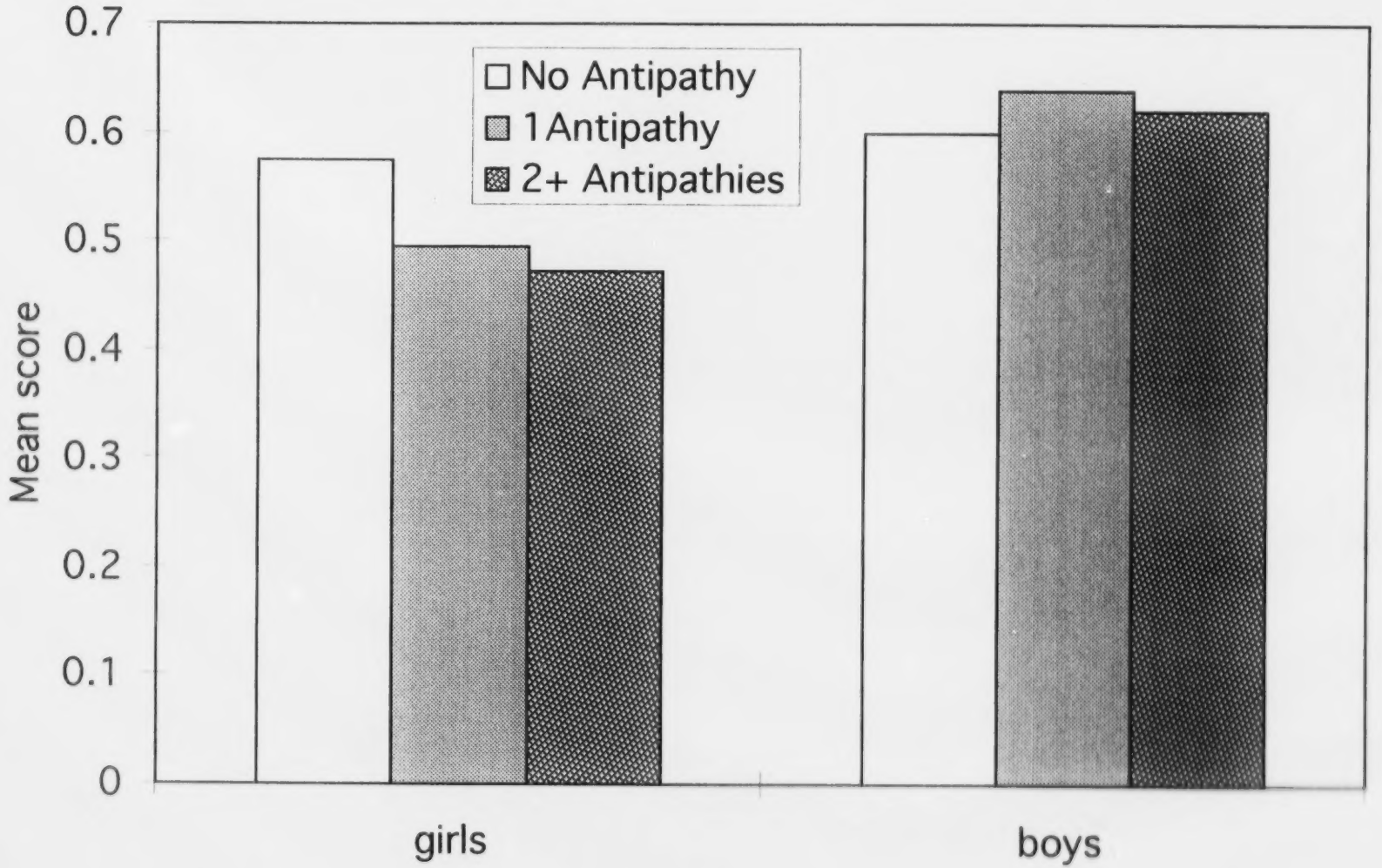

0.3
0.2
0.1
0
-0.1
-0.2
-0.3
Mean Score
Girls
Boys
No Antipathy
1 Antipathy
2+ Antipathies

Fig 5

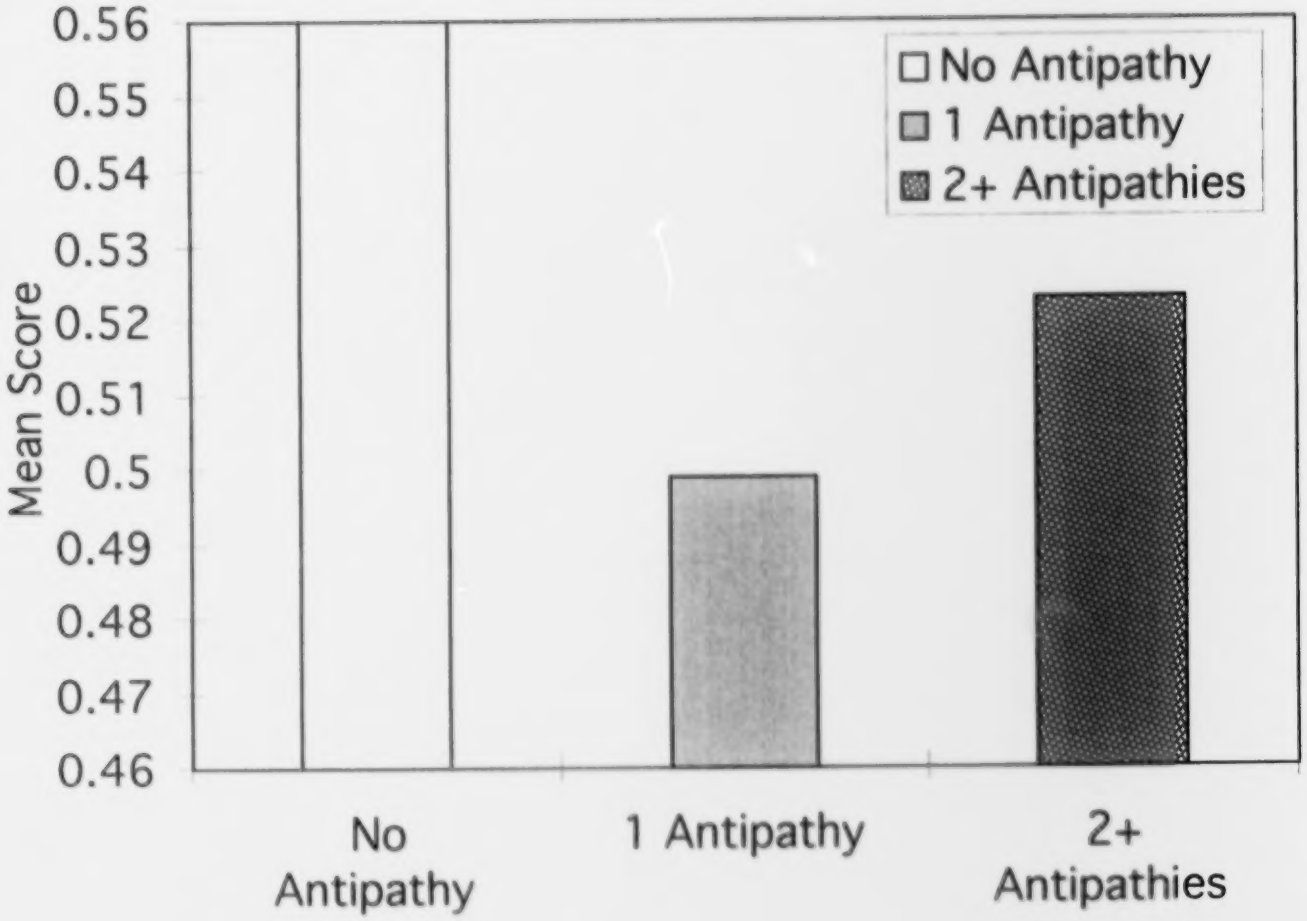

0.63
0.625
0.62
0.615
0.61
0.605
0.6
0.595
0.59
0.585
Mean Score
No Antipathy
1 Antipathy
2+ Antipathies
No Antipathy
1 Antipathy
2+ Antipathies


0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
0.1
0
Mean Score
No Antipathy
1 Antipathy
2+ Antipathies
girl
boy


0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
0.1
0
Mean score
No Antipathy
1 Antipathy
2+ Antipathies
girls
boys

30

31


0.56
0.55
0.54
0.53
0.52
0.51
0.5
0.49
0.48
0.47
0.46
Mean Score
No Antipathy
1 Antipathy
2+ Antipathies
No Antipathy
1 Antipathy
2+ Antipathies